

Common early-day sight in Hailstone

Hailstone





# SLOW GOING

In beginning mud was drivers' foe; today potholes are cause of woe

By Joan Provost

Almost 80 years ago this summer, a little-known automobile executive decided to drive cross-country from his home in Detroit to the West Coast. According to the April 1985 Smithsonian, Henry Joy, president of the Packard Motor Car Co., sought travel instructions from his local Packard dealer. Supposedly the conversation went something like this:

"Roads? There isn't any!"

"Then how do I go?"

"Well, drive down there and through that gate. Just be sure that when you get on by, close it. You'll see a lot of those gates. Make sure you close them as you go through."

Joy wasn't starting his trip on roads. His was a voyage through pasture lands rutted from wagon wheels sinking into deep spring muds. Not long after Joy's experience, the motor car industry recognized the need for a strong system of national highways. Joy became president of the Lincoln Highway Association, which led the drive for the first major transcontinental roadway. Those years were a long way from six-lane freeways and 65 mph speeds. Roads were concrete or brick paved, and the ride was akin to the open air comfort of a red flyer wagon.

Drake Hokanson, Smithsonian writer and Lincoln Highway historian, noted that before Joy's attempted cross-country trek, only a few hundred people had tried transcontinental travel in an automobile. But just before World War I, maps and promotional literature changed things. "A man living in an old pony express station along the Lincoln Highway in Utah recorded only 52 automobiles passing his door during June of 1913," Hokanson notes. "But two years later his count for the month was

*Dr. A. L. Inglesby and Wallace Bransford in Pierce Arrow heading for Grand Canyon. USHS collections.*



Utah State Historical Society photo

**Before World War I, pulling automobiles out of the spring mud was the rule rather than the exception.**

225."

Today in Wyoming, the old Lincoln Highway parallels more modern roadways, its concrete fractured by bouquets of weeds and sagebrush. Now asphalt sizzles beneath the rumble and snort of giant 18-wheelers. In March, motorists are looking forward to better weather and, as U.S.

News and World Report once noted, "Every spring as sure as the dogwoods and daffodils bloom, potholes pop up or rather down." According to magazine statistics for 1985, U.S. News estimated 56 million potholes were waiting receptacles for automobile tires — and most of those holes were more than a foot wide and 5 inches deep.

Along with dimpled pavement, something other than potholes comes to Utah every spring — the University of Utah-sponsored Annual Asphalt Paving Seminar, which takes place this year on March 25.

Within this assemblage are the men and women behind a wiggly veil of rising pave-

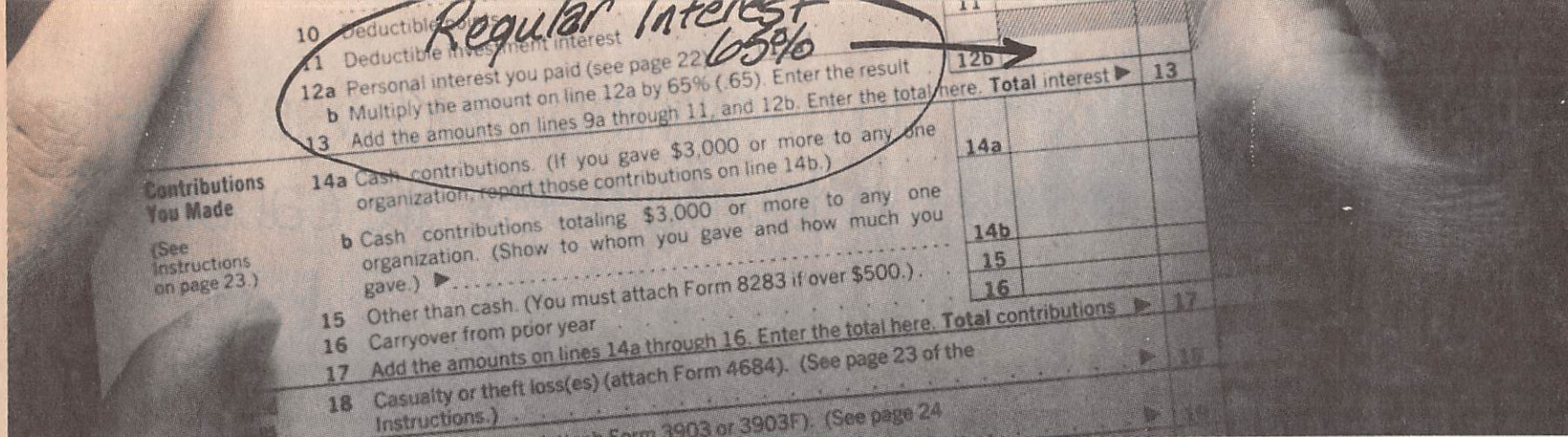
ment heat when temperatures reach 98 degrees. They resurface existing roads, cleaning out, packing down and smoothing over holes and slithery cracks. Part of this number also are the suit and tie types — the engineers who determine the direction, the slant and the width of highways. They are scientists whose alchemy involves potions of tar and gravel and occasional oddball factors like rubber. Also there are suppliers — individuals who ship and sell materials that go into resurfacing and building roads.

Well, so what! Asphalt paving is not, you say, the meat and potatoes of a Steven Spielberg movie. But you might be interested in knowing that asphalt can help keep cash in your wallet or drain it dry. The Road Information Program, an association promoting highway interests, has compiled a few rather nasty pothole statistics. They estimate that after a very treacherous tango with spring road conditions, motorists could do as much as \$2,000 damage to their car. Asphalt itself is not the culprit — spring runoff scars roadways as weather conditions freeze and heat up pavement surfaces. Filling a pothole might remind you of a trip to the dentist. Road workers dry out the cavity, drill here and here scraping away rough edges. Then comes the stuffing and compacting with what experts say is the best fill, a hot mix of asphalt.

The 13th Annual Asphalt Paving Seminar is sponsored by 15 private and state agencies in cooperation with the University of Utah. The seminar will be at the Energy Mines classroom on campus and will cover road maintenance, rehabilitation, construction practices, technical topics and a new computer aids exhibit.

Further information is available from the U.'s Conferences and Institutes at the at 581-5809.





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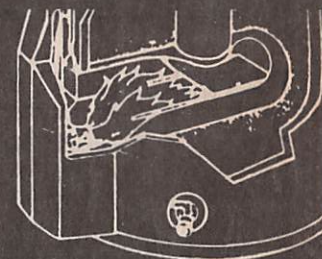


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